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CARMEN SECULARE

FOR

THE YEAR 1800.

BY

HENRY JAMES PYE, P. L.

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THE YEAR 1900

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INTRODUCTION.

THE controversy about the commencement of the Nineteenth Century, which has lately so much occupied the public mind, being of consequence to me, who am officially called on to give a public opinion on it, I very early turned my thoughts to the subject, and soon adopted the notion most generally received—that January 1, 1801, would be the first day of the Nineteenth Century.

I found, however, all authority drawn from former precedents against me; I found that the *Secular Masque* of Dryden was performed at Drury Lane Theatre early in the year 1700; and that Prior's *Carmen Seculare* was written for the same year, and obviously for the 1st of January. These examples were sufficient authority for me, independently of their shewing the received opinion of that time. I found also in the schedule to

the Act of Parliament for altering the Style, and which is printed in all the Common Prayer Books, these words:—"For the next century, that is, from the year 1800 to the year 1899 inclusive"*

In the French Encyclopedie, Article Lettre Dominicale, we find, "Il changera en 1800, en 1900, en 2100, &c. en un mot au commencement de chacun des siecles dont la première année n'est pas bissextile." And again under Cycle Solaire, explaining the tables, it says—"La première de ces tables sera pour le siecle qui a commencé par l'année 1600; la second pour les siecles qui commencent par les années 1700, 2100, 2500, 2900, 3400, &c.

There is yet a stronger authority, arising from the history of the institution of the Christian Era, as it is usually called, though now known not to be reckoned from the real Birth of our Saviour, but which makes no difference with respect to the present question.

A native of Scythia, Dionysius Exiguus, so named

* Though the meaning of this is very clear; yet, like some other parts of other Acts of Parliament, it is not very accurately expressed. See the next note.

INTRODUCTION.

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from his stature, who exercised the function of Abbot at Rome in the sixth century, thinking it disgraceful that the Christians should reckon their years from the foundation of a city which was the seat of their persecutors, resolved to introduce a new era from the birth of Christ, which he fixed on the 25th of December, in the year of Rome, 753 ; but to accommodate it to the Roman Calendar, he reckoned from the first of January ensuing, in the manner that he exemplified by the following table of the first century, and on which the calculation of the beginning and close of the century just commenced in the table in our Common Prayer Books is founded.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37
38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	51	52	53	54	55	56
57	58	59	60	61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70	71	72	73	74	75
76	77	78	79	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90	91	92	93	94
95	96	97	98	99														

Thus much for authority. It now remains to shew how the difference of opinion has arisen.

Those who maintain that the Nineteenth Century does not begin till January 1st, 1801, consider the year One to mean the whole of the first year from 0 to 1. Those, on the contrary, who, following the above authorities, consider it as commencing January 1st, 1800, conceive 1800 not to mean the 1800th year, but that atom of time, if I may be allowed the expression, past before we can say it is, that marks the completion of the 1800th year from Christ,* as one o'clock does the completion of the first hour; marking the cardinal number of years from the event, and not the ordinal number of the year. It must be acknowledged that Isaacson, and after him Blair and Playfair, reckon according to the last mode; not

* This may possibly be illustrated by an anecdote of an indictment being set aside because it stated that the crime was committed between the hours of four and five, which was impossible; it should have been between four and five o'clock. On the most awful event that ever happened, the ninth hour is used for the completion of that hour, or as we should now say, nine o'clock. Matthew, ch. xxvii. ver. 46. Mark, ch. xv. ver. 34. The Romans reckoned their hours in this manner, and sometimes their years; otherwise the precept of Horace, "*Nonum prematur in Annum*," has been always wrongly translated.

so Cardanus Rider, who I presume is as good authority. He, in his Chronology for the present year, to take one splendid example from many, tells us Lord NELSON's victory happened 1798 years after Christ, and that it is two years since it happened.*

The hours of the day on a clock, the mile-stones on the road, a carpenter's rule, the manner of reckoning degrees of latitude and longitude from the equator, or the first meridian, all confirm this hypothesis, as marking not the whole spaces of their respective measures, but the end of them; and especially the years of a man's life. When a man says he is thirty, he does not mean that he is in his thirtieth year, but that thirty years have elapsed since his birth.†

Having said thus much in defence of myself and the authorities I follow, I beg leave to deprecate the resent-

* In a late publication on distinguished characters of the last year, it is thus described, 1799—1800. This is exactly according to the table of Dionysius.

† The first of January may be called, according to the common era, the birthday of Christ; and as Pope says, a birthday

“Is but the funeral of the former year.”

ment of those who are of a different opinion, for they are in general very warm in their cause. I do not positively insist that they are in the wrong; I only mean to shew on what grounds, and on what authority I am in the wrong, should I happen to be so; a favour I have seldom had granted by those with whom I have argued *vivâ voce*.

CARMEN SECULARE

FOR THE YEAR 1800.

I.

INCESSANT down the stream of Time
And days, and years, and ages, roll,
Speeding through Error's iron clime
To dark Oblivion's goal ;
Lost in the gulf of night profound,
No eye to mark their shadowy bound,
Unless the deed of high renown,
The warlike chief's illustrious crown,
Shed o'er the darkling void a dubious fame,
And gild the passing hour with some immortal name.

B.

II.

Yet, evanescent as the fleeting cloud,
Driven by the wild winds o'er the varying skies,
Are all the glories of the great and proud,
On Rumour's idle breath that faintly rise.
A thousand garbs their forms assume,
Woven in vain Conjecture's loom;
Their dyes a thousand hues display,
Sporting in Fancy's fairy ray;
Changing with each uncertain blast,
Till melting from the eyes at last,
The shadowy vapours fly before the wind,
Sink into viewless air, "nor leave a rack behind."

III.

But if the raptur'd train whom Heaven inspires
Of glory to record each deathless meed,
Tune to heroic worth their golden lyres,
And give to memory each godlike deed,
Then shall the eternal guerdon wait
The actions of the wise and great ;—
While as from black Oblivion's sway
They bear the mighty name away,
And waft it, borne on pinion high,
With joyful carol to the sky,
Sage History, with eye severe,
Tracing aloft their bold career,
Clears the rich tale from Fiction's specious grace,
And builds her sacred lore on Truth's eternal base.

IV.

Hence from the splendid tales of old,
That Græcia's mystic story told,
From all that copious Fancy sings
Of fabled demi-gods and kings,
The godlike bard with master hand
Sublime his epic wonder plann'd;
And while fair Fiction's richest dyes
Still fascinate the gazing eyes,
Such precious gems, from Truth's refulgent mine,
Amid the bright materials shine,
That as her cares the gorgeous mass explore,
The Muse of History stamps the Poet's sterling ore.

V.

In frozen climes, 'mid Error's shade,
The northern Muse records the hero's name.
While, as her glowing hand portray'd
The wonders of the warrior's fame,
Led through the mazes of the fight
The royal maid and elfin knight,
O'er the wild scene of magic hue
Her awful mirror History threw ;
Till, as before Sol's ardent fire,
The lesser glories of the sky expire,
Faded the Muses' quivering lamp away,
Sunk in the radiant blaze of Truth's meridian ray.

VI.

Yet still their votive fingers twine
For Virtue's sons the wreath divine ;
Still round the victor's godlike brow
They bid their freshest laurels grow ;
And many a chief, of warlike name,
And many a sage, of letter'd fame,
Whom Genius, Worth, and Glory give
In Britain's graver page to live,
By Britain's verse adorn'd shall flourish long,
Her solemn annals grace, and consecrate her song.

VII.

Lo, bursting from its scanty source,
Flows through the lowly mead the rippling stream,

No harvests in its waters gleam,
No swelling canvass marks its course :
But as it winds amid the hills,
A thousand congregated rills
Pour in its bed from every side,
And swell the undulating tide,
Till the charm'd eye the expanding deep explores,
While Commerce loads its wave, and Plenty crown its shores.

VIII.

So through the silent lapse of time,
By Glory's ceaseless currents fed,
Has Britain's power increasing spread,
And roll'd its plenteous waves to every clime.
Mightier in each succeeding age,
She lives through Fame's recording page;

From her scyth'd cars that wide destruction hurl'd
On the proud master of a subject world,
To her bold fleets that o'er the azure main,
Teach Earth's remotest shores to bless her GEORGE's reign.

IX.

As the wing'd hours, in endless flight,
Urge on their destin'd way,
Fond Hope anticipates a happier day,
While opening ages crowd upon her sight.
Yet still a lingering look is cast
On deeds of ancient glory past.—
Hence dwells the Muse, with partial eye,
On years of crested chivalry—
On England's sons by EGBERT join'd;
On ALFRED's comprehensive mind,

Who chased Invasion from her coast,
Who boasted yet a prouder boast,
To drive Oppression from her land
By laws which patriot wisdom plann'd ;
On EDWARD'S and on HENRY'S fame,
Mark'd in charactery of Gallic shame ;
On the bold warriors of the royal maid
Who high the British trident first display'd.—
Hide Britain ! hide a guilty age,
Blood-stain'd by wild Sedition's rage,
And on a happier era gaze—
Era of Albion's brighter days,
Now in the blaze of heavenly light that dies,
Sure from its Phoenix nest a form as bright shall rise.

X

Once more exult Britannia's train,
Triumphant in a female reign,
And all ELIZA's fame in ANNA blooms again;
Again her victor navies sweep,
By RUSSEL led, the confines of the deep;
While o'er Germania's spacious fields,
Or where her liberal foison Belgium yields,
Unconquer'd MARLBRO' bids her thunders fall
On the crush'd helmet of the vanquish'd Gaul.
On fam'd Ramillia's plains he stood,
On Danube's borders, red with hostile blood;
On Oudenard, where GEORGE's warlike brand
Proclaim'd the future lords of Albion's land,
The dauntless heroes of the BRUNSWICK line,
Kings of Britannia's choice, true heirs of right divine.

XI.

Not great in arms alone—a wreath more fair
Than ever conquest knew to wear,
For ever verdant and for ever young,
Of peace and love domestic sprung,
To concord sacred, and from carnage free,
Shall crown her blest, her proudest victory ;
What time she taught the guardian wave that roars
A native rampart round her stormy shores,
To clasp for ever in its fond embrace
The sister nations of Britannia's race,
Ocean's stern regent shouting from his tide,
The realms which God has join'd shall never man divide.

XII.

She falls—the queen, the patriot falls—once more
Her eye Britannia turns to Elba's shore ;
Again the Saxon steed, whose silver form
Led the brave warrior through the battle's storm,
Waves in her banners wide, and throws
Amazement on her baffled foes,
Happy in mingled folds to join
With each bold tribe of Albion's ancient line,
With Erin's golden harp, and Scotia's threat'ning spine.

XIII.

Again the battle roars !—again the mind
Of fickle Gaul to proud Iberia join'd,

Shakes the red reins of wild Ambition's car—
Britannia rouses to the naval war,
Prompt to avenge her martial train
Insulted on the wave, her own domain—
While Caledonia's sons misled,
On England's hills rebellion spread ;
A transient stain, long wash'd away
By seas of blood, in many a hard fought day.—
With doubtful chance, but unabated rage,
In foreign fields the adverse hosts engage,
On Tournay's plains, the astonish'd foe
Saw Albion's warriors, great in overthrow,
Win in defeat a lasting wreath,
Though stain'd with slaughter, and defac'd by death ;
While happier Dettingen bade Victory's wing
Wave o'er Britannia's sons, Britannia's king,
Till Slaughter wearied quits her crimson car,
Yet 'mid a transient peace prepares for future war.

XIV.

Stung with rekindling rage, from Ganges' shore,
To where Sol's fiery coursers steep
Their glowing bosoms in the Atlantic deep,
Resounds the horrid yell of Discord's roar.
The feather cinctur'd chief, who roves
Through Canada's resounding groves,
Hears Niagara's thundering fall, or laves
In frore Laurentius' sea broad waves—
The blameless tribes of Brama's race,
Who India's spicy forests trace ;
The despot lords, and sable bands,
Who tread on Senegal's wide burning sands ;
Fair Lusitania's vine clad coast
Rescued from proud Invasion's host,
Germania's broad and rich domain,
Embden's strong towers, and Minden's trophied plain,

Beheld BRITANNIA's ensigns wave,
Potent to conquer, or to save ;
While far o'er Ocean's stormy bed,
Wherever Valour fought and Conduct led,
Her ample sails she saw unfurl'd,
Hail'd by surrounding shores, queen of the wat'ry world.

XV.

Why clouds the sky? why swells the gathering storm
O'er the soft breezes blown from Zephyr's breath?
'Tis he, the fiend!—I see his ghastly form—
See the terrific arm of death.
High, high he rears his iron dart,
To rive the venerable monarch's heart.
Short triumph!—Glory's amaranthine flowers
Shed heavenly fragrance o'er his parting hours.

Though the funereal cypress shade his bier,
Victoria twines her votive laurels there,
Soothes with her voice his placid breast,
And wafts his spirit to the realms of rest—
While godlike to his grandsire's throne,
Britannia sees her native Prince arise,
Pours the loud pæan to the skies,
Hailing with fond acclaim a Monarch all her own.

XVI.

Yet fiercer blaz'd awhile the martial flame—
Awhile o'er Gallia's prostrate head,
Her kindred shield Iberia spread,
The lavish purchaser of shame;
Till the united foes o'erborne,
Their honours tarnish'd and their laurels torn,

Yielding the field, the storms of battle cease,
And Europe, joyful, hails the blest return of Peace.

XVII.

Beneath the olive's fostering shade
Now loves each peaceful art to grow,
Bounty, in seraph garb array'd,
Strikes with her rod the rock, the streams of Science flow.
The marble gives the breathing form,
As nature perfect, and as nature warm ;
The canvass to the eye portrays,
With heroes fam'd in earlier days,
Full many a chief of generous worth,
Offspring of Albion's parent earth :
The gallant youth on Abraham's heights who fell,
Where weeping Victory rung his hallow'd knell,

In emulative tints his warriors leads,
“ Again for Britain fights, again for Britain bleeds.”

XVIII.

The Muses now their golden lyres
Vibrate responsive to the warbled song,
And Rapture wakes the thrilling wires;
In measur'd cadence to the sound,
Sweet flows the magic strain around,
And charms the listening throng.—
Nor do the softer arts alone,
The genial dew expanding own;
Rais'd by the Monarch's favouring smile,
Severer Science hails the happy isle.
Mathesis with uplifted eye,
Tracing the wonders of the sky,

Now shews the mariner to guide
His vessel through the trackless tide ;
Now gazing on the blue profound,
Where whirl the stars in endless round,
Beholds new constellations rise,
New systems crowd the argent skies ;
Views with new lustre round the glowing pole,
Wide his stupendous orb the Georgian planet roll ;

XIX.

Seas, where yet the venturous keel
Never plough'd the foaming wave,
Isles, the halcyon gales that feel,
Temper'd by tides the southern shore that lave,
Where smiling Peace and genial Love
Through shades perennial rove ;

The bleak inhospitable plains,
Where in dread state antarctic Winter reigns,
Where never yet the solar power
Has warm'd even noontide's sullen hour,
Shot through the frozen sky his vigorous beam,
Unbound the soil, or thaw'd the stream ;
In every clime from pole to pole,
Where wind can blow, or billow roll,
Britannia's barks the coast explore,
Waft Science, Peace, and Plenty o'er,
Till Earth's remotest regions share
A wealthy people's stores, a patriot Monarch's care.

XX.

Proud o'er the heaving surges of the deep,
See the tall ship in state majestic ride !

Wide spread her swelling sails in ample sweep,
Dread roars the thunder from her lofty side ;
Awful she looms, the terror of the main,
And billows rage, and tempests howl in vain—
Yet in the planks unheeded, day by day,
Works the insidious worm his subtle way ;
The puny malice of an insect train
Destroys what mountain waves, and winds, assail in vain.

XXI.

Fell Sedition's rancorous race,
Treachery, with serpent eye,
Sophistry, whose guileful tongue,
Pleads the specious cause of wrong,
Envy, with her Gorgon face,
And smooth Hypocrisy,

These dire fiends united bore
Their poison to the Atlantic shore ;
All, with silent hate impress'd,
The offspring lur'd from the fond mother's breast.—
Betray'd—deceiv'd—the thoughtless brood,
Rear'd, like the pelican, with parent blood,
Turn their wild vengeance 'gainst Britannia's heart,
And aim, with fatal rage, the parricidal dart.

XXII.

Mad to destroy an envied foe,
The Gaul vindictive aids the traitorous blow.—
As when o'er Asian plains pale Eurus flings
Contagion from his hovering wings,
While issue from his noisome breath,
Dark fumes of pestilence and death,

The wretched inmates of the soil,
Stung by insatiate lust of spoil,
Reckless of fate, the tainted plunder seize,
And drink polluted steams of dire disease.
So from the borders of the Atlantic shore,
The faithless race the taint of faction bore.

Each poison rank in Gaul's prolific air,
Sheds wide its seeds, nor asks the planter's care ;
Fed by the produce of the region fell,
Unnumber'd monsters thrive, the progeny of hell.

Oppression's black insatiate brood,
And raging Lust, and Murder steep'd in blood,
Mad Anarchy's tumultuous band,
The locusts of a wretched land ;
Wild Atheism's blood-shot eye,
Lifted in impious threat against the sky,
Who from the dying wretch, with fiendlike power,
Tears the last comfort of the parting hour—

All drink new vigour from the fatal air,
Raise high their baleful crests, and boast their empire there.

XXIII.

O'er Europe's coasts the black contagion spreads—
From sluggish waves that scarcely roll,
Beneath the torpid influence of the pole,
To summer seas renown'd of yore,
That lave Hesperia and the Grecian shore;
O'er all, the gale malignant poison sheds.
The fatal Siroc for a while
Blows o'er our distant fields, and taints our happy isle.

XXIV.

But soon the guardian angel of the main,
Protective of his favourite reign,
Swells the fresh breeze—before its healing breath
Flies the destructive progeny of death ;
Freed from the pest alone Britannia stands,
Bulwark and envy of surrounding lands,
While trembling Europe Gallic rage deplores,
Through her unpeopled walls, round all her ravag'd shores.

XXV.

Mysterious Heaven !—at thy behest
Ne'er let misdeeming man repine ;
'Tis our's to bow with patient breast,
To punish, and to spare, is thine.

What though with giant arm the host,
Murder their joy, and blasphemy their boast,
The favouring angel seem to guide;
Though Fame and Conquest fan their feverish pride;
Though their red feet in impious triumph trod
On the crush'd servants of the LIVING GOD;
Does not thy voice direct afar
The fury of the elemental war?
Do not the pestilence and storm
The awful mandates of thy will perform?
Whether the thunder's threat'ning power
Tremendous shake the midnight hour,
Or Zephyr's genial breeze of dawn,
Scatter fresh blossoms o'er the vernal lawn;
Whether Hygeia swell the balmy gale,
Or o'er the sky Fate's noisome vapours sail,
Be this on man's submissive soul impress'd,
All waits upon thy will, and what thou will'st is best.

XXVI.

Ye Belgian regions! Lincelle's glorious plain,
And Valentinian's conquer'd towers proclaim
Of Britain's generous sons the warlike fame,
Brave on the embattled field as on the main.—

The strongest arm is weak to save

The treacherous self-devoted slave.—

With torpid gaze, lo! Europe's sons beheld

Wave after wave, with rising force impell'd,

Roll o'er their plains in fatal power,

Their harvests waste, and shake their loftiest tower.

From countless foes, and timid friends,

Britannia's host her sea-girt rock ascends,

And views the storm, that tears surrounding lands,

Break like the idle surge against her wave-worn sands.

XXVII.

In vain the proud vindictive foe
Threatens to deal the homefelt blow—
Lo, from the loom, the farm, the fold,
Her voluntary swains enroll'd,
Quit for the sword life's calm domestic charms ;
Each wood the clarion shakes, each valley gleams with arms.
Amaz'd, abash'd, the vaunting host,
That frown'd destruction on her chalky coast,
Flies with its boasted chief to meet disgrace,
'Mid Syria's glowing sands, and Egypt's servile race.

XXVIII.

The murky cloud that wraps the skies,
Melts to the winds—With golden gleam

Again Hyperion sheds his radiant beam,
And vernal gales and hours resplendent rise.
Lo! where the sons of havock spoil
Fair Salem's venerable soil,
Profane the consecrated earth,
Scene of a Saviour's hallow'd birth,
By favouring breezes wafted, to the skies
Britannia's red cross banner flies,
Speaks to the impious foe celestial ire,
In voice of thunder, and with breath of fire—
Soon falls the boast of Gallia's demon fame,
In whelming billows sunk, or wrapp'd in sheets of flame.

XXIX.

Scenes portray'd in ancient lore,
Scenes whence England's chiefs of yore,
Raising high the blazon'd shield,
O'er Palestine's religious field
The wreaths of conquest bore;
Acon's bulwarks, Jaffa's towers,
Leading where his mail clad powers,
RICHARD to the Paynim dart
Dauntless bar'd his lion heart—
Where the venom'd stroke of death,
Aim'd at EDWARD's bosom, fail'd,
While his faithful consort's breath
From the deep wound the poisonous taint inhal'd;
There, with pious glory bright,
Another Briton braves the fight,

Follow'd by a gallant train
Of naval warriors, from their native main,
Who round their walls a breathing bulwark rise.
Serenely brave the Christian hero stands,
And the proud spoiler of Hesperian lands,
Before the warlike few, dismay'd and vanquish'd, flies.

XXX.

Excited by the vaunting foe,
Again the Indian Satrap's pride
The force of Britain's arms defied,
And aim'd the fatal blow—
Again decreed her warlike train
Should fall by Murder's arm, or wear Oppression's chain.—
Vain hope! her veteran bands defy
The glowing sand, the sultry sky,

Wind through the deep irriguous vale,
The rampire-crested mountain scale,
Till steep'd in gore, before his captur'd walls,
Breathing revenge in death, the fierce usurper falls.

XXXI.

Glorious and godlike heirs of fame,
With sinewy arm, with daring breast, who brave
The howling tempest and the heaving wave,
And hostile vengeance pour'd in vollied flame,
Ocean, where'er his billows flow,
Records your conquests o'er the foe ;
Where by disgrac'd Iberia's shore
Biscaya's turbid waters roar ;
Where by the Gaul's insulted coast
Destruction wrecks her scatter'd host;

By Erin's rocks, Batavia's sand,
Hesperia's liberated strand,
Proudly ye ride, while round each sheltering cape
The adverse fleets inglorious speed their way,
Cautious avoid the unequal fray,
Their proudest boast to fly, their triumph to escape.

XXXII.

Spirits of warriors! who of yore,
By yellow Tiber's trophied shore,
Saw heap'd on rich Campania's soil,
A conquer'd world's collected spoil;
And thou, O JULIUS, whose embattled host
First shook Invasion's scourge on Albion's coast,
Say, when from CASSIBELLAN's agile car,
Flash'd the just vengeance of defensive war;

Say, did ye deem that e'er the painted race,
In distant times, your shore remote should trace,
Chase from your far fam'd towers Oppression's doom,
Restore your wasted fields, protect the walls of Rome.

XXXIII.

Sire of the winter drear,
Who lead'st the months in circling dance along,
May Peace and Concord claim the votive song,
That chants the glories of the rising year;
For Albion longs around her generous brow
To bind the olive's sober bough,
Though unappall'd her laurel'd front defies
The fiery blast that flashes through the skies.—
Wooing, O Peace! thy halcyon ray,
Ready she stands for war, nor shuns the ensanguin'd fray;

But on Ierne's kindred sky
She casts Affection's fondest eye.
O! as the era past saw ANNA join
Each warrior nation of Britannia's line,
So may the auspicious hours that now ascend,
The sister isles in ceaseless Union blend—
While Ocean's guardian arms around them thrown,
Form to their coasts an adamantine zone;
There, proudly rising o'er the circling main,
Lord of the waves, their patriot King shall reign;
And fam'd through every clime, from pole to pole,
Long as the unfailing stream of Time shall roll,
Religion, Virtue, Glory, shall adorn
The illustrious age of GEORGE, the Monarch Briton born!

THE END.

th
and

CARNEY, HENRY

But our land is a land of
the east, a land of the east
O! as the east wind
Each vision nation of Britain's line
So may the vision of the east
The sister is in eastern Union land—

While Ocean's golden sun
From its coast an advancing sea
There proudly rising on the eastern main



Lord of the world
And the world
Long as the world
Religion, virtue, shall adorn

The illustration is of George, the Monarch, in his own

Printed by the British Museum
London

